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5-20-1890

# Report : Petition of L. Owen

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### Recommended Citation

S. Rep. No. 1067, 51st Cong., 1st Sess. (1890)

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MAY 20, 1890.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. BLAIR, from the Committee on Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany S. 2841.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2841) granting a pension to Lizzie Wright Owen, have examined the same and report:

This bill has received favorable action by your committee in two former Congresses. The report then made is adopted and the passage of the bill recommended.

[Senate Report No. 177, Fiftieth Congress, first session.]

The claimant is the daughter of George Wright, late a brigadier-general of the United States Volunteers. We append hereto the record of his distinguished military service furnished by the War Department, and a notice of his services, and death, which appeared at the time. Also a copy of her petition, which states the grounds of her present claim, and other documents in support thereof.

She is now poor, and her physician in this city presents a statement of her present condition, that she is suffering with attacks of disease, increasing in severity, which will soon entirely disable her.

It will be observed that the extraordinary services and misfortunes detailed in this case prevent its forming a precedent to any extent for other applications, and to refuse this application would in the opinion of your committee be an exhibition of ingratitude unworthy the Republic.

We recommend the passage of the bill.

*To the honorable Committee on Pensions, United States Senate:*

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to present my petition for a pension at the rate of \$50 a month in recognition of the services of my father, the late General George Wright, United States Army, who after more than forty years' services lost his life while in pursuance of his official duty in traveling from California to Oregon on the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, which was lost July 30, 1865.

His wife, my mother, losing her life at the same time, no pension has ever accrued to any member of the family for my father's services, and at this date, I, his only daughter, find myself a widow entirely dependent on my own exertion for the support of myself and daughter, with a son still dependent upon me for assistance in placing him in life. My health, which has of late failed, may at any time unfit me for further exertions, and I pray that a consideration of these facts, and furthermore that my husband served for eighteen years as an officer of the Regular Army, but resigning a short time before his death deprived me of a pension on his account, and that my brother, the late Col. Thomas F. Wright, to whom I might have looked for assistance in my present circumstances, having been killed in the Modoc war, and no pension being drawn at the present time for his service, may have such weight with the honorable committee as may induce you to grant my prayer.

LIZZIE WRIGHT OWEN.

## BRIGADIER-GENERAL WRIGHT.

When a noble and brave soldier falls in the heat of battle, the sorrow that must be felt is in a measure assuaged by the fact that he perilled life in a noble cause—the defense of the land of his birth and the institutions of his Government. We are apt, however, when we learn the sudden taking from our midst of a faithful soldier, to lose sight of the great good he accomplished in his official career. But a few brief days and we chronicle the departure of Brig. Gen. George Wright, to take command of the new military District of Columbia. We little thought that it should be our duty to pen the notice of his death, for we have no reason to doubt that he, with the ill-fated passengers of the *Brother Jonathan*, has found a watery grave.

California and the Pacific coast may well put on sables, for one of the truest and best of men has been taken from among us. As a military chieftain, his record stands among the most distinguished of American generals. Not alone was he great in the field—where masterly ability characterized his every action—but his diplomatic tact, as evidenced during the trying period of the past four years, enabled our people to enjoy the blessings of peace.

We owe everything to that conciliatory spirit which marked General Wright's military administration, and it must be remembered, that although many could not look into the future with his foresight, the whole nation is indebted, in a very great measure, for the pacification of the turbulent spirit which at one time threatened to embroil us on the Pacific coast in the horrors of rebellion and civil war. When we look back and review the past, we can not but feel grateful to the wisdom and prudence which marked General Wright's career. Isolated as we were at the inception of the rebellion, almost wholly without defense, with a community of mixed and multiform opinions, liable to become excited, and when excited to do deeds of violence, which sober second thought would condemn, he steered the bark of nationality throughout the whole sea of troubles with discretion, foresight, and wisdom. At the time we speak of California did not appear as prominent as history has made her. The slightest difficulty—a rupture between the civil and military authorities—would have embroiled her in the horrors which beset our sister States. At this period our industry was an essential to the maintenance of our Government and our institutions. If we were not in actual strife, if the clang, clamor, and clash of conflict did not resound from San Diego to Fraser River, we know of no one but Brigadier-General Wright to whom the honor and credit is due.

Peace has its victories as well as war. In a peaceful capacity General Wright did his country great service. Had California proved recreant to her fidelity to the Union; had our mines ceased to pour their wealth into the National Treasury, who could depict the sad picture of our national dishonor? During General Wright's direction of the military department of this coast, no measure was left untried which could further, not alone our own interests, but the great and absorbing interests of the General Government. By his wise and conciliatory conduct he cemented the bonds of union and drove gaunt war and all its attendant horrors from our midst.

General Wright was a soldier, and had a record that any great and good man might feel proud of. His career in Mexico and in the various Indian campaigns in Oregon is well known. He was born in Vermont, and entered the Army as a second lieutenant of the Third Infantry in July, 1822. His rank in the Regular Army was colonel of the Ninth Regiment of Infantry, and he was brevetted a brigadier-general of volunteers in 1861. He leaves a son in the service, a colonel, commanding the Sixth Regiment of California Volunteers, at the Presidio.

As an officer he won the respect and esteem of all; as a man he was kind and genial; as a citizen he filled all the various positions with credit to himself and the flag he served and so revered. His loss is a public calamity, yet the keen edge of sorrow is tempered when we all know that, covered with years and honors, he surrendered life in the discharge of his duty.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
Washington, June 17, 1886.

*Statement of the military service of George Wright, late of the United States Army, compiled from the records of this office.*

He was a cadet at the United States Military Academy from September 14, 1818, to July 1, 1822, when graduated and appointed second lieutenant Third Infantry; promoted first lieutenant September 23, 1827, and captain October 30, 1836; transferred to Eighth Infantry July 7, 1838; promoted major Fourth Infantry January 1, 1848;

lieutenant-colonel February 3, 1855; appointed colonel Ninth Infantry March 3, 1855, and brigadier-general United States Volunteers September 28, 1861.

He received the brevets of major March 15, 1842, "for meritorious conduct in zeal, energy, and perseverance in the war against the Florida Indians;" of lieutenant-colonel August 20, 1847, "for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Contreras and Churubusco, Mexico;" of colonel September 8, 1847, "for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battle of Molino del Rey, Mexico," and of brigadier-general December 19, 1864, "for long, faithful, and meritorious services."

He joined his regiment September 29, 1822, and served therewith at Fort Howard, Wis., to July, 1824; on recruiting service to May, 1826; with regiment at Fort Howard, Wis., to September, 1826; at Jefferson Barracks, Mo., to May, 1828; at Fort Leavenworth, Kans., to May, 1829; at Jefferson Barracks, Mo. (regimental adjutant from February 1, 1831, to October 30, 1836), to September, 1831, and at Fort Jesup, La., to October 7, 1836; on leave to February, 1837; on recruiting service to October, 1838; with regiment at Madison Barracks, N. Y., to May 2, 1840; at Fort Winnebago, Wis., to June 22, 1840; near Fort Crawford, Wis., to July 8, 1840; at Madison Barracks, N. Y., to August, 1840; at Jefferson Barracks, Mo., to September 3, 1840, and in the operations against Seminole Indians in Florida to June 3, 1841; on leave to October, 1841; with regiment in Florida to April 26, 1844; on recruiting service to December 25, 1846, when he joined his regiment and served with it in the war with Mexico, being wounded September 8, 1847, at the battle of Molino del Rey. He commanded the regiment from September 20 to November 25, 1847, the second brigade, first division, army of Mexico, from November 25 to December 15, 1847, and the regiment to February 20, 1848; was on detached service in the city of Mexico to March, 1848; on sick-leave to June, 1848; mustering out volunteer troops to August, 1848; awaiting orders to November, 1848; commanded the post of Fort Ontario, N. Y., from November 13, 1848, to June 15, 1852; en route to California to August 19, 1852; on duty at Benicia Barracks, Cal., to September 17, 1852; was in command of Fort Reading and the northern district of California to May 19, 1855; commanded his regiment at Fort Monroe, Va., from July to December 15, 1855; en route to Washington Territory to January 22, 1856; he commanded the Columbia River district to June, 1857; Fort Dalles, Oregon, to July 17, 1858; the expedition against Cœur d'Alene and Spokane Indians to October 16, 1858; Fort Dalles, Oregon, to June 15, 1859; Fort Walla Walla, Wash., to June 29, 1860; the Department of Oregon from July 5, 1860, to September 13, 1861; the Department of the Pacific from October 20, 1861, to July 1, 1864, and the district or California to July 27, 1865. He was drowned July 30, 1865, in the wreck of the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, while on his way to Portland, Oregon, to assume command of the Department of the Columbia.

O. D. GREENE,  
*Assistant Adjutant-General.*

WASHINGTON, D. C.

*To the honorable the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Pensions:*

The undersigned respectfully beg leave to invite the attention of your honorable committee to the claim for pension presented by Mrs. L. W. Owen, the daughter of the late General George Wright, U. S. Army.

General Wright entered the military service as a commissioned officer, upon graduation from the Military Academy in 1822, and remained therein continuously until his death in 1865, which occurred at sea by the foundering of the steamer *Brother Jonathan* between San Francisco and the Columbia River, General Wright being at the time en route to Portland, Oregon, to assume command of the Department of the Columbia.

General Wright's record of military service extended over a period of near half a century, covering three wars (Seminole, Mexican, and the Rebellion), and unnumbered conflicts with hostile Indians, in all of which he was most highly distinguished and successful.

While serving in the junior grades his record was invariably characterized by zeal, energy, and brilliant acts of gallantry. In the higher grades, and especially as a general officer in command of the Department of the Pacific during the critical period of the late war, his services were of inestimable value, characterized by wisdom and ability, both as a soldier and statesman, of the highest order.

His whole career was that of the gallant, noble, heroic, spotless man and soldier whose deeds and fame will ever be remembered and cherished in our service.

At the time of his death he was accompanied by his wife, who went down with him. His son was killed in the lava-beds during the Modoc war while gallantly leading his company.

We are informed that no claim for pension has heretofore been presented on account of the services of either father or son. Mrs. Owen, the only daughter, was widowed

several years since and left with quite a family of children. By her own exertions she has hitherto reared, educated, and maintained her children most respectably and well; but now, with advancing years and in failing health, she asks aid from a generous Government in her and their support.

We respectfully beg to hope her claim will receive your most favorable attention and consideration.

P. H. SHERIDAN,  
*Lieutenant-General.*

R. MACFEELEY,  
*Commissary-General of Subsistence, Brigadier-General, U. S. Army.*

J. C. KELTON,  
*Colonel, Assistant Adjutant-General.*

JOHN NEWTON,  
*Brigadier-General, Chief of Engineers.*

JOHN M. WILSON,  
*Lieutenant-Colonel Engineers, Colonel, U. S. Army.*

JOHN G. PARKE,  
*Colonel of Engineers, Brevet Major-General.*

S. V. BENÉT,  
*Brigadier-General, Chief of Ordnance.*

A. BAIRD,  
*Brigadier-General, Inspector-General.*

O. D. GREENE,  
*Assistant Adjutant-General, Brevet Brigadier-General.*

ROBT. N. SCOTT,  
*Lieutenant-Colonel Third United States Artillery.*